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Vietnam: It is not yet clear whether the Communists are responsible for the assassination of Education Minister Tri.

A suspect has been apprehended, and it is widely assumed that he acted under orders from the Communists, but this has not been established. If the Communists are behind the deed, this would be the first time they have killed a South Vietnamese cabinet member. Tri had made a number of enemies, however, mainly as a result of his anticorruption campaign, and the possibility that some disgruntled non-Communists are responsible for his death is also being investigated.

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The Communist call for the replacement of the Saigon government with a new "peace cabinet" continues to come strongly. A Liberation Radio broadcast of 3 January attempted to show that Saigon's recent actions demonstrate its disinterest in getting the war settled; the broadcast put the real blame for all this squarely at Washington's door.

According to the Communists, there can be no distinction or serious differences between the present Saigon government and the US. The Communists argue--as they have for years--that the present government could not exist without US troop support. Hence, they call for both a US withdrawal and the formation of a new peace cabinet, either of which they would consider to be major steps toward larger Communist objectives.

A similar appeal issued on 5 January by the other Communist front, the National Alliance, called for the immediate overthrow of the Thieu government]

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[and the formation of a new peace cabinet which "sincerely seeks peace" and which will negotiate with the Liberation Front for a "correct" political settlement. In this most recent Communist commentary, Premier Huong is one of the prime targets. Both broadcasts follow the current pattern of expanding the long-standing phrase "Thieu-Ky clique" to include Huong. [REDACTED]

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Czechoslovakia: The Dubcek leadership may have found a compromise solution to the problem of replacing National Assembly President Smrkovsky.

The Czechoslovak party bureau for the Czech lands of Bohemia and Moravia has proposed that Smrkovsky be downgraded to vice president of the new federal assembly and appointed head of one of its two chambers. This proposal follows declarations by both Czech and Slovak party organizations that one of the top three federal government posts must be held by a Slovak.

Dubcek and his colleagues may be behind this compromise proposal, hoping it will head off demonstrations by Smrkovsky supporters and a strike by more than a million workers. It would probably satisfy Soviet demands that Smrkovsky be removed as one of the top leaders.

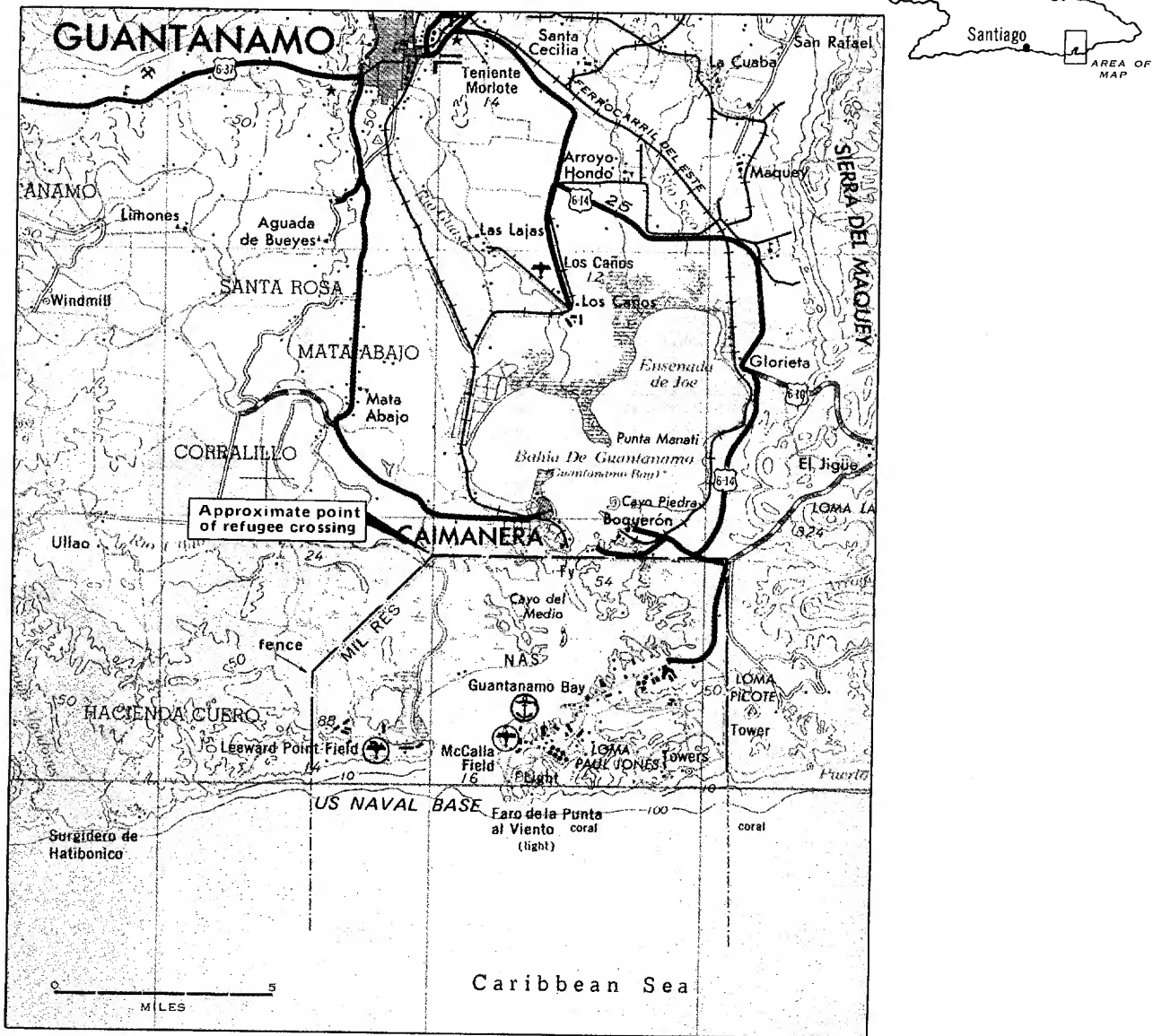
A leading candidate for the post of federal assembly president is conservative Jozef Lenart, a Slovak who served as premier under former party boss Novotny. Lenart's appointment would probably please the Soviets. They have been in touch with him in recent weeks.

[REDACTED]

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Cuban Group Flees into US Guantanamo Base



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C Cuba: More than 100 Cubans attempted a mass escape into the US naval base at Guantanamo at dawn yesterday.

Eighty-six refugees, fleeing through a hail of bullets, succeeded in reaching the safety of the base. Another 30, however, were captured by Cuban security forces before they could scale the base perimeter fence, according to a Marine sentry at the scene. At least three of those captured were hit by gunfire.

The incident took place at a point where the northern boundary of the base turns to the southwest. It was the largest escape ever attempted at the base.

Although background information is not yet available, the mass exodus was probably prompted by Cuba's continuing domestic economic difficulties. As consumer goods have disappeared and rationing has become more stringent, an increasing number of Cubans have sought refuge at the naval installation. In 1964, 37 "fencejumpers" entered the base; in 1965, 72; in 1966, 138; in 1967, 515; and in 1968, 1,005.

The magnitude of the escape will probably force Havana to bolster significantly the strength of the Frontier Brigade--the army unit charged with maintaining fenceline security. Fidel Castro may choose to ignore the matter publicly, however, because any open protest would only serve to underline a situation that has proved a constant embarrassment to his regime.
(Map) **]**

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Brazil: There has not been much apparent progress toward resolving the government's leadership quandary, but pressures for action are building up.

25X1 [redacted] the government appears to be dividing into two camps--for and against President Costa e Silva. The President is continuing his efforts to shore up his position, but many officers are dissatisfied with his failure to make fuller use of the broad dictatorial powers he assumed last month. If the President does not act soon to carry out the "revolutionary" programs they advocate, some may consider dumping him. Interior Minister General Albuquerque Lima is reportedly gaining considerable support from these hard-liners.

One move the President has made was to cancel for ten years the political rights of 13 persons, including opposition spokesman Carlos Lacerda as well as one government party and ten opposition deputies and a federal judge. Many military men want the President to strip other "corrupt and subversive" persons of their rights. The government will probably issue new lists soon--which may include not only "unacceptable" congressmen, but also some members of the supreme court or the supreme military tribunal.

Government tampering with the judicial system would probably provoke strong international criticism. This in turn could well strengthen the hand of narrow nationalists among the hard-liners who want Brazil to "go it alone" without regard to international opinion.

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Nationalist China: High-level personnel changes appear to have strengthened the control of Defense Minister and heir apparent Chiang Ching-kuo over Taiwan's military and security forces.

The most significant shift is the promotion of Lt. General Wang Sheng, a rapidly rising protégé of the defense minister, to head the important National Security Bureau. In contrast, several senior military commanders who have been reserved in their support of Chiang Ching-kuo apparently have been shifted to positions in which they can be more closely controlled.

The changes are part of President Chiang Kai-shek's continuing efforts to build his son's power base in order to ensure an orderly succession. Most recently, President Chiang packed the top positions of the Kuomintang party hierarchy with supporters of his son in order to broaden Chiang Ching-kuo's political support.

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Guyana: The Guyanese Defense Force has put down the crude and poorly supported insurrection. The Venezuelans, who directed the affair, have backed off from their expansionist efforts for the time being, but the desire to recover "Guyana Essequibo" will remain strong. Prime Minister Burnham is in a vindictive mood and has had the Guyana Defense Force raze the ranches of the revolt leaders. He is also unhappy with Brazil for refusing to return captured rebel leaders to face trial for treason, but it is doubtful that his present attitude will have more than a short-term effect upon Brazilian-Guyanese relations. [REDACTED]

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Peru: The Peruvian Supreme Court has denied the right of the International Petroleum Company (IPC) to protest the expropriation of a large part of its holdings. The court's decision stated that the expropriation was an act of sovereignty and thus not subject to challenge by a private company. The decision ends IPC's initial recourse to the Peruvian judicial system. There is no indication of what the company's next move will be. [REDACTED]

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Pakistan: On 5 January Karachi gave government critic Asghar Khan a tumultuous welcome which far surpassed any reception the city ever accorded President Ayub. As many as 200,000 people may have participated--the largest crowd to gather in Karachi since the funeral of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, "founder of Pakistan," in 1948. Although trouble had been expected, local governmental authorities and police, acting with firmness but restraint, were successful in maintaining order. [REDACTED]

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Indonesia: Prospects have improved for arranging a peaceful vote on self-determination that will formalize Indonesian control of West Irian. On 1 January, L. Mandatjan, one of the area's last two rebel leaders, surrendered in response to a government amnesty, leaving the position of the remaining leader seriously weakened. The poorly armed but persistent rebel groups have irritated and embarrassed the Indonesian Government off and on since they took over West Irian from the Netherlands in 1963.

Djakarta has indicated an intention to meet to some extent the desires of West Irians for broader political participation.

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